

# International Day in Honour of Britches

To honour Britches, to remember those who were not rescued,  
and honour those currently trapped in labs.

Britches was the name of a stump-tailed macaque monkey who was born into a breeding colony at the University of California, Riverside in March 1985. He was removed from his mother at birth and had his eyelids sewn shut as part of a three-year maternal and sensory-deprivation study involving 24 infant monkeys. The study was conducted by David H. Warren.



Britches was removed from the laboratory, along with 1,115 other animals, when he was five weeks old during a raid on April 20, 1985 by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). He was named by Joseph who led the cell.

The ALF made a videotape of their raid and of Britches' condition when they found him. As a result of the publicity when the video was released by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and after condemnation of the experiments by scientists and the American Council of the Blind, eight of the 17 studies interrupted by the raid were not restarted, and the university stopped allowing baby monkeys' eyes to be sewn shut, according to reports filed by the university with the government. Dr. Grant Mack, president of the American Council of the Blind, called the experiment "one of the most repugnant and ill-conceived boondoggles that I've heard about for a long time."

The experiments were designed to study the behavioral and neural development of monkeys reared with a sensory substitution device. Five groups of four macaques were to be raised from birth to three months, and one group to six months, blinded while wearing a Trisensor Aid (TSA), an experimental version of a blind travel aid, the Sonicguide. Other control groups were to wear the device with normal vision, or wear a dummy device with no vision. At the end of the experiment, the monkeys were to be killed, and the visual, auditory and motor areas in their brains would be studied.

Activists found Britches alone in a cage with bandages around his eyes and a sonar device attached to his head that emitted a high-pitched screech every few minutes. He was clinging to a device, covered in towelling that had two fake nipples attached, apparently intended to serve as a surrogate mother.

Veterinarian ophthalmologist Dr. Ned Buyukmihci of the University of California, Davis, and founder of Veterinarians for Animal Rights, examined Britches after he was removed from the lab. He stated that the sutures used were too large and that the monkey's eye pads were filthy. He said: "There is no possible justification for this sloppy, painful experiment."

Bettina Flavioli, a veterinarian hired by the ALF, examined Britches and wrote a report on the day of his removal from the lab. According to Ingrid Newkirk, president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the report read:

*"On this day, April 20, 1985, I have been called to administer an examination and follow-up care to an infant stumptail macaque, male, my guess approximately five weeks of age. Said infant allegedly liberated by the Animal Liberation Front from the UC-Riverside laboratory.*

*"Attached to infant's head by means of bandage and tape is an apparatus of some sort with what appears to be some sort of electrical cord extending from it. It has been cut. Bilaterally are short lengths of tubing emerging from the bandage. Tape is in direct contact with the face and neck. Bandage lifted rostrally from right eye due to excessive moisture and right eye partially visible.*

*"Beneath the bandages are two cotton pads, one for each eye ... Both pads are filthy and soaked with moisture. Bilaterally upper eyelids are sutured to lower eyelids. The sutures are grossly oversized for the purpose intended. Many of these sutures have torn through lid tissue resulting in multiple lacerations of the lids. There is an open space between upper and lower lids of both eyes of about one quarter inch, and sutures are contacting corneal tissue resulting in excessive tearing ...*

*"Infant demonstrates photophobia. Penis of infant is edematous and inflamed. There are smegma accumulations. Generalized muscle development poor. Skin dry. Body odor foul."*

Britches was one of the (relatively) lucky ones. He was lovingly cared for and though the psychological trauma lasted for a time, he was able to fully recover from his physical injuries. Then, when he was five months old he was flown to a primate sanctuary where he was adopted by an elderly female macaque who had already raised several orphans.

Sadly, elsewhere in laboratories thousands of primates just like Britches are suffering, unprotected by laws that allow painful and useless tests to be performed upon them. Please share the story of Britches with your friends and please don't support the vivisection industry.